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For Immediate Release

Judicial Nominating Commission releases names of nominees to fill vacant District Court judgeship for Crittenden, Union and Webster counties

FRANKFORT, Ky., Jan. 21, 2005 — The Judicial Nominating Commission, led by Chief Justice Joseph E. Lambert, met today at the Union County Courthouse in Morganfield to choose nominees to replace Judge C. Rene' Williams who was appointed as circuit judge for the 5th Judicial Circuit on Nov. 9, 2004. The vacant District Court judgeship serves the 5th Judicial District, which is comprised of Crittenden, Union and Webster counties. Three attorneys were named as nominees to fill this vacancy: Marion attorney William S. Greenwell, Dixon attorney Joel C. Rich and Morganfield attorney Thomas E. Simpson.

Simpson submitted the only official application. State law requires the Judicial Nominating Commission to forward the names of three candidates to the governor for his consideration in making the appointment to a vacated judicial position. Both Rich and Greenwell had not made application for the appointment and are not interested in the position. However, they have consented to their names being submitted by the Commission in order to comply with state law.

Simpson resides in Morganfield and currently serves as city attorney for Morganfield in Webster County and Clay in Webster County. He is also assistant commonwealth's attorney for the 5th Judicial District with primary responsibility for the criminal docket in Webster Circuit Court. Simpson earned a juris doctor from the University of Louisville Brandeis School of Law and a bachelor's degree from Western Kentucky University.

Judicial Nominating Process

When a judicial vacancy occurs, the executive secretary of the Judicial Nominating Commission publishes a notice of vacancy in the judicial circuit or the judicial district affected. Attorneys can recommend someone or nominate themselves. The names of the applicants are not released. Once nominations occur, the individuals interested in the position return a questionnaire to the Office of Chief Justice. Chief Justice Lambert then meets with the Judicial Nominating Commission to choose three nominees. Because the Kentucky Constitution requires that three names be submitted to the governor, in some cases the commission submits an attorney's name even though the attorney did not apply. A letter naming the three nominees is sent to Gov. Ernie Fletcher for review. When the governor appoints a replacement, his office makes the announcement.

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District Court

District Court is a court of limited jurisdiction which hears civil cases involving \$4,000 or less, juvenile matters, city and county ordinances, misdemeanors, cases relating to domestic violence and abuse, guardianships for disabled people, traffic offenses, probate of wills and felony preliminary hearings. The Small Claims Division is part of District Court's jurisdiction and informally handles matters with a value of \$1,500 or less. The Administrative Office of the Courts in Frankfort, Ky., supports the activities of more than 3,400 Kentucky Court of Justice employees, including the elected offices of justices, judges and circuit court clerks.

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